

H.B. No. 5144: An Act Concerning An Appropriation to Expand the Nurturing Families Network  
*Testimony to Support the Nurturing Families Network Expansion*

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my thoughts regarding the expansion of the Nurturing Families Network. My name is Jackey Dieli, Director of Family Strides, Inc., a health and social service agency servicing Litchfield County. Family Strides, Inc. has been a Nurturing Families Network site since 1999, providing home visits, phone support and group based services to families beginning during pregnancy and continuing until that child reaches age 5. Within these programs, families are provided with emotional support, access to services, information and education on fetal/infant/child development, assessment of infant/child development, family advocacy, and case management. These services are necessary for the health and well being of caregivers, children and communities in order to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect and to decrease the likelihood of families becoming involved in the Department of Children and Families system.

Throughout the 10 years of our Nurturing Families Network existence, we have serviced many families that have graduated from the program after being enrolled in home visitation services for over 5 years. Based on the intensity of service delivery, home visitors maintain a manageable caseload in order to provide quality, comprehensive support to mothers, fathers and their children. The expansion of the Nurturing Families Network would enable sites to provide services to families currently ineligible for these primary prevention services that have been proven to assist in building positive parenting practices, to move families out of poverty, to strengthen the family unit and to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

I fully support HB No. 5144 to expand the Nurturing Families Network to provide services to single parents at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. This is a vulnerable population, many times in need of additional parenting supports. The Nurturing Families Network provides families with tools necessary to foster healthy child growth and development. Families do not become involved in the Department of Children and Families system. Instead they learn to make healthy choices for themselves and for their children, and to nurture their children, thus ensuring the development of healthy adults. I urge you to support the expansion of the Nurturing Families Network, under the CT Children's Trust Fund, a successful program that makes a positive difference in the lives of children and families.

Sincerely,  
Jackey Dieli  
Director  
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